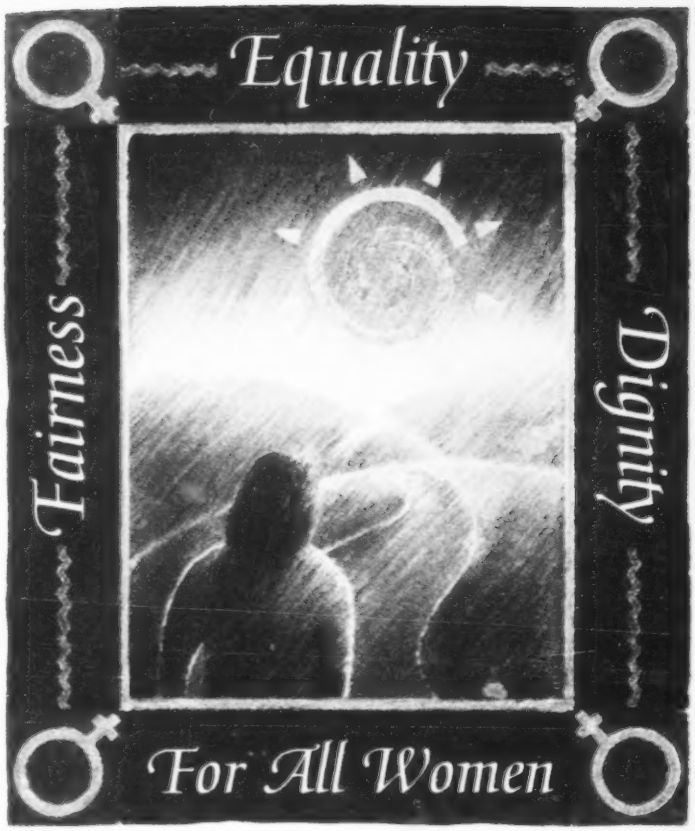
Nova Scotia
Advisory Council on
The Status of Women

Conseil consultatif sur la
condition féminine de la
Nouvelle-Écosse

An agency of the Province of Nova Scotia

Annual Accountability Report for the Fiscal Year 2001-2002



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Annual Accountability Report for the Fiscal Year 2001-2002

September 2002

Nova Scotia Advisory Council
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Accountability Statement

The accountability report of the Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women for the year ended March 31, 2002, is prepared pursuant to the *Provincial Financial Act*, the *Advisory Council on the Status of Women Act*, 1977, c. 3, s. 6(1) and government policy and guidelines. These authorities require the reporting of outcomes against the Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women's business plan information for the fiscal year 2001-2002. The reporting of the Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women's outcomes necessarily includes estimates, judgments and opinions by the Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women management.

We acknowledge that this accountability report is the responsibility of the Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women's management. The report is, to the extent possible, a complete and accurate representation of outcomes relative to the goals and priorities set out in the Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women's business plan for the year.

Minister

Chair

Executive Director

Message from the Minister/Chair

Message from the Minister

As the Advisory Council on the Status of Women embarks on its 25th year of service, I would like to extend thanks to all the women who have served on the Council in its 25-year history. My own experience with Council members shows them to exemplify the best traditions of volunteerism and public service. They are unstinting in the time and energy which they devote to the fulfillment of an inspiring mission: to advance equality, fairness and dignity for all women.

The accountability report which I am pleased to bring forward covers many activities of benefit to women, and, indeed to all Nova Scotians. Whether addressing women's ongoing educational and occupational interests and needs, the continuing problems of violence against women or the challenges confronting health care, the Council remains a proactive and dynamic voice for women's equality in Nova Scotia.

Message from the Chair

The year 2001-02 marked the first year in which I held office as Chair of the Advisory Council on the Status of Women. As the first Chair from Cape Breton in the Council's 25-year history, I am grateful to the Council members who elected me to this post, and appreciate their confidence and support throughout the year.

As this report demonstrates, the year has been successful in addressing all of the priorities we set out in our plan of action. Of particular interest to me and to the other members of Council is the workshop to foster women's participation in electoral politics in Nova Scotia, and to more generally promote women's participation in public affairs. To take a part in the agencies, boards and commissions of government is one important avenue for participation, and I would recommend to women in communities throughout Nova Scotia to consider this way of contributing to a better future for all of us.

An accountability report offers an opportunity to give credit where it is due. We have benefitted from the support of our Minister, Honourable Jane S. Purves, throughout the year, and we thank her for it. As Advisory Council members, we also recognize the dedication and ability of the staff of the Council. They form a team in the true sense of the word, and have been able to rise to the challenges inherent in a time of fiscal restraint in creative, productive and positive ways.

My term as Council Chair continues to be a positive and developmental life experience. I have always valued my personal contact with women in the community, and appreciate their willingness not only to share problems, but also to look forward, to take their place in finding the solutions to the challenges confronting us all. My sincere thanks go out to all of the women in Nova Scotia who have made this such a rewarding experience.

Highlights of 2001-02

The Advisory Council on the Status of Women continued to focus on its legislated mandate of advising government and bringing forward the concerns of women, within a framework of four strategic goals:

- working toward the inclusion of all women;
- promoting women's economic equality;
- reducing violence against women;
- working toward improved health and well-being for women and their families.

Through solid collaboration between Council members and staff, the agency was able to communicate to government and to the public a variety of positions and publications supportive of women. Policy briefs such as those addressing custody and access of children in the context of possible *Divorce Act* reform; statistical publications describing the state of Nova Scotia's population and families; the enormously popular publication, **Making Changes: A Book for Women in Abusive Relationships**; and initiation of the 5-year Healthy Balance Research Program, funded by the Canadian Institutes for Health Research, with the Atlantic Centre of Excellence on Women's Health as the lead partner–these were among the highlights of the year.

A perennial issue for women in Nova Scotia is their poor representation in elected office, compared to all other Canadian jurisdictions. To address this important issue, the agency has developed a workshop to increase women's participation in public affairs. Initial results from the first workshop, held in Yarmouth in partnership with Business and Professional Women (BPW)-Yarmouth, met or exceeded expectations, and these workshops will be extended to other communities in Nova Scotia in the coming year.

The Advisory Council on the Status of Women initiated celebrations of its 25th anniversary year on International Women's Day, March 8, 2002, with a celebration of women in the arts hosted by Her Honour Lieutenant-Governor Myra Freeman whose support is gratefully acknowledged.

The 25th anniversary year was further launched with Council's being awarded the Leadership Award for Women's Health by the Atlantic Centre of Excellence for Women's Health. The award was received to acknowledge the Advisory Council's continuing contributions to the betterment of women's health and well-being throughout its 25-year history.

Since its inception in 1977, the Advisory Council on the Status of Women has brought over 1,000 recommendations to Government. These recommendations are now available through a searchable database located in the Resource Centre of the agency. The Resource Centre holdings include over 5,000 volumes of literature, particularly government documents, related to the status of girls and women. The Resource Centre staff also administers the web site, attracting over 49,000 page views per year and sending out the electronic news service, **NewsBytes**, to subscribers– www.gov.ns.ca/staw.

Introduction

The contents of this accountability report are based on the goals, priorities and outcomes described in the Advisory Council's business plan for 2001-2002. The report describes the accomplishments and progress that the Advisory Council has made in meeting those goals and priorities.

This report is organized around the Advisory Council's strategic goals which are described below. Accomplishments and progress for each of the agency's four strategic goals appear in the next section of this report, followed by financial information and outcome measures.

Background

In April 1975, the Government of Nova Scotia appointed a seven-member Task Force on the Status of Women and instructed them to study the Report of the Royal Commission on the Status of Women (1970) with particular reference to those recommendations within provincial jurisdiction; report to the government on the status of women in the province; and recommend to government actions necessary to improve the status of women in Nova Scotia. This report is summed up in the publication entitled *Herself/Elle-Même* (1976).

The Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women was established in 1977 to advise the provincial government on issues of interest and concern to women, and to bring those issues forward.

The mandate of the Advisory Council on the Status of Women is defined by the *Advisory Council on the Status of Women Act*, which was first passed in 1977. The mandate and powers of the Advisory Council on the Status of Women are set out in Section 4 of the Act:

- to advise the Minister upon such matters relating to the status of women as are referred to the Council for consideration by the Minister;

- to bring to the attention of the Minister matters of interest and concern to women.

The Council's powers are:

- to receive and hear petitions and suggestions concerning the status of women;
- to undertake and recommend research on matters relevant to the status of women;
- to recommend and participate in programs concerning the status of women;
- to propose legislation, policies and practices to promote equality of opportunity and status;
- to publish reports, studies and recommendations.

Since 1977, the Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women has kept women's issues on the agenda of governments. The Minister responsible for the Status of Women appoints 10 to 12 women to the Advisory Council from all regions of the province. Council members stay in touch with women in their communities, identifying opportunities and needs for government action. Diversity is a hallmark of Council membership and action, as the Council seeks to be inclusive of all women in Nova Scotia. Council staff work on policy research, public education, and community awareness building.

MISSION, GOALS AND CORE FUNCTIONS

OUR MISSION

To advance equality, fairness and dignity for all women in Nova Scotia.

OUR GOALS

- To increase the participation of women in all their diversity in decisions that affect their lives, families and communities, with particular emphasis on those who face discrimination because of race, age, language, class, ethnicity, religion, disability, sexual orientation, or various forms of family status.
- To promote women's economic equality.
- To reduce violence against women in communities, workplaces and families.
- To improve the health and well-being of women and their families.

OUR CORE FUNCTIONS

Research and Policy Development
The Council advises the Minister Responsible for the Status of Women on the concerns and priorities of women, and formulates strategies and options to address these. The Council conducts quantitative and qualitative research in consultation with community groups and government departments to ensure advice is a feasible, relevant, timely and accurate guide to government action.

Information and Communication Services
The Council collects and disseminates information on women's issues to the Minister, Council, staff, and other key stakeholders, including the media and the general public. Through a comprehensive communications strategy, Council informs and influences key stakeholders about issues and concerns affecting women, Council, and government priorities, activities and accomplishments, as well as about opportunities for improvement in addressing women's issues.

Community Liaison and Rural Outreach

Through Council members and fieldwork staff, the Advisory Council brings forward concerns of women from across Nova Scotia, with particular attention to historically disadvantaged groups. Council also partners with communities, organizations, and agencies to advance equality for women in programs and services.

Progress and Accomplishments
2001-02

Goal: Participation and Inclusion

Council works to increase the participation of women in all their diversity in decisions that affect their lives, families and communities, with particular emphasis on those who face discrimination because of race, age, language, class, ethnicity, religion, disability, sexual orientation or various forms of family status.

Sustained Effectiveness of the Advisory Council

The Advisory Council on the Status of Women met formally five times during the fiscal year 2001-02. These meetings resulted in direction for issues such as *Divorce Act* reform; the future of the Human Rights Commission; women's political participation; initiatives such as restorative justice and redesign of the service delivery system for family violence; the *Domestic Violence Intervention Act*; and the disparate impact on women of proposals for no-fault automobile insurance.

Rita Warner, of Judique, Cape Breton, was elected to the position of Council Chair effective April 1, 2001. This marked the first instance of a Council Chair's serving from Cape Breton. Her election was welcomed by the community, with over 125 congratulatory and supportive calls, letters and messages, along with very positive media coverage, especially in Cape Breton and throughout rural Nova Scotia. During the summer of 2001, Ms. Warner visited nine communities in the Valley, Western and South Shore regions of the province. In February, 2002, the Chair was invited to make a presentation on employment equity to the federal Standing Committee on Human Resource Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities in Ottawa, and the Chair also attended the meeting of the Coalition of Canadian Advisory Councils on the Status of Women there.

All Council members took an active part in their communities, with varied involvement in the work of women's centres and other women's groups; Inter-Agencies on Family Violence; programs to increase the participation of girls and women in science, trade and technology; conferences and forums in various communities, with all Council members attending the Women in Business Conference held in Sydney, Cape Breton; non-resident land ownership; and self-esteem programs for young women. Council members also continue to play an active role in the equity reference groups associated with the Healthy Balance Research Program.

Through its Council members, its field staff and its 1-800 line, the agency provides information and referral to some 1500 women per year in all parts of the province. Figure 3 (see page 20) below illustrates the very wide range of topics about which women get in touch with us.

Increasing participation of women in public affairs

In December, 2001, the Chair, Executive Director and Coordinator of Regional Services took part in the "Building Women's Leadership" forum, which brought together some 50 political scientists, politicians, and community leaders from all parts of Atlantic Canada to learn about and reflect on the challenge of attracting and retaining women in electoral politics.

That forum was a valuable contribution to the Advisory Council's own efforts in this area, which centre around developing a series of workshops on women's political participation, the first of which was held in 2001-02. With the support of all three provincial political parties, valuable advice from political scientists such as Professors Louise Carbert and Naomi Black, hard work from our co-op student Tara McMullen, and the advice of Executive Council Office, workshop materials were developed and detailed arrangements made for inspiring speakers and an interested audience. Sixteen women attended this first workshop which was held in Yarmouth, in partnership with the Business and Professional Women (BPW)-Yarmouth. As the outcomes reported in a later section of this report indicate, participants found the workshop components valuable (over 90% of participants indicated they would recommend the workshop to other women and close to 80% indicated an interest in future workshops), and the targets set for plans to increase future participation were met or exceeded. Significant numbers of participants indicated their intention to increase participation in political life: 67% said they would become more active in federal-level politics, 25% in provincial-level politics, 39% in municipal-level politics, and 23% in community-level politics. The Advisory Council looks forward to co-sponsoring additional workshops of this type in the coming fiscal year.

Communications and Media Relations

The Advisory Council continued to mark dates and events important for women, such as the National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women on December 6. Seventy people, including elected representatives, media, government officials, transition house staff, police officers, and members of women's groups took part in the December 6 commemorative ceremony held in the Red Room at Province House which was covered by the three television networks. International Women's Day on March 8 was marked by a celebration of women in the arts. Her Honour, Lieutenant-Governor Myra Freeman was host to 150 guests at Government House for this event.

During the fiscal year 2001-02, there were 58 print media stories covering Council. Sixteen of these stories related to Council's statistical publications, and 8 covered Council events, with the remainder including commentary on various issues of the day.

The Council's web site has become increasingly important as a communications tool. During 2001-02, there were 49,264 page views. This represents an increase of almost 43% over the previous fiscal year (no data is available for first two months of 2000-01 fiscal year). As all Council publications are now available for download, the utilization of these publications as well

as the overall use of the Council's website has been extended significantly. In the fiscal year, 8,439 Council publications were downloaded from the Internet. This represents an increase of 893% over the previous fiscal year[1]. It is clear that this increase has been affected in part, both by the public's burgeoning familiarity with PDF files and the fact that many more Council publications were available in PDF format in 2001-02. By comparing the electronic and hard-copy demand for a single publication, we can get a clearer sense of the popularity of our web-based publications. For example, in 2001-02, approximately 300 print copies of our statistical report *Money Matters* were requested while, 1,374 electronic copies of *Money Matters* were downloaded from the Council's web site. Through use of electronic media, Council publications have more than four times as much public reach with no associated cost increase.

As a consequence of the web site's popularity, Council made the decision to replace its print newsletter with an announce-list, where subscribers are notified of significant happenings about once every two weeks through the electronic publication of **NewsBytes**. This approach saves significant time and money, as well as providing a more timely way of keeping interested people informed. While Council reached the decision to develop NewsBytes in 2001-02, our electronic newsletter only began circulating in April of 2002. We are keeping careful records of NewsBytes' increasing popularity and will report on its progress in next year's accountability report.

Inclusion of women in all their diversity in government policy development and program design

Actions undertaken to ensure that women's issues are taken into account in policy and program design are also covered under later sections of this report, where the strategic goals of economic equality, reduction of violence against women and improved health and well-being are addressed.

In the fall of 2001, delegations of Advisory Council members met with Government and Opposition caucuses, to ensure that all elected representatives were aware of Council's work and the priorities of women in Nova Scotia. These presentations gave an overview of the issues which Council addresses on behalf of women, and encouraged elected representatives from all parties to make sure that the concerns of women are taken into account in their decision-making.

Social inclusion–the need to involve groups that have been without a voice in government and society–has been a theme within a number of federal initiatives, as well as being of interest to the Province of Nova Scotia. Council staff contributed to two forums organized by the Atlantic Centre of Excellence on Women's Health (attendance of 75 community leaders) on the subject of social inclusion, and offered advice on ways to foster socially inclusive perspectives in policy

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[1]There were no PDF documents on the Council's web site prior to October of 2000. When comparing only those portions of the fiscal years when PDF documents were posted, the increase in PDF downloads from 2000-01 to 2001-02 was 682%.

development and program design.

Goal: Economic Equality

Council works to promote women's economic equality.

Council and staff work in partnership with numerous government departments and agencies, as well as a wide variety of non-governmental organizations that focus on the economic security of women.

Since its inception, Council staff have been involved in the development and implementation of the Sustainable Communities Initiative, an intergovernmental effort to develop more collaborative relations across all levels of government and between governments and communities to promote better communication and coordinated action on issues affecting the sustainability of rural communities. In addition to having representation on the Steering Committee, there are Council staff working on the field teams for Annapolis-Fundy and the Bras D'Or Watershed.

Two statistical publications of Council were released during the fiscal year. The first, **Family Matters,** gave an overview of Nova Scotia's population and family structures, and resulted in much higher levels of interest and demand than anticipated. Over 1,200 copies (paper and electronic formats combined) were distributed/downloaded between November/01 and March/02. The economic and social consequences of population down-sizing are of increasing concern not only to governments and academics, but also to business and the general public. In consequence of this research, the importance of better support for young families became apparent to Council, and that position has been and will continue to be forwarded to government departments such as: Intergovernmental Affairs, Community Services, Health, Environment and Labour, and the Public Service Commission.

The second publication, **Women's Education in Nova Scotia: 25 Years of Change**, documented the enormous changes in women's educational status in the past generation. While women are now equally likely as men to be enrolled in disciplines such as commerce, medicine and law, it is clear that women remain seriously under-represented in science, engineering, technology and trades. In order to continue addressing this issue, Council members and staff worked with groups such as Techsploration, the Association of Nova Scotia Women for Education and Research in Science (ANSWERS), and the Hypatia Group–all organizations with a shared interest in promoting women's equal participation in those sectors of the work force where women remain seriously under-represented. One outcome, during 2001-02, of Council's on-going partnership activities in this area, was a Round Table for Deans of Science and Engineering, attended by eight key decision makers who responded with enthusiasm and interest to the keynote presenter, NSERC-PetroCanada Chair for Women in Science and Engineering, Professor Mary Williams of Memorial University. This event was immediately followed by a career-building workshop for 15 women scientists and engineers with very positive reaction.

Two groups with which Council staff are closely involved are the Women's Community Economic Development Network and Nova Scotia Women's FishNet. These organizations focus on rural and coastal community women, encouraging the development of viable communities despite economic and structural changes. The Women's CED Network benefits from Council staff participation on their Board of Directors, and promotion of their Community Building Learning Series. Council staff provided advice and in-kind assistance to FishNet in the development of a fact sheet kit to assist women address policy issues related to their economic security and well-being. Council staff also provided support in the dissemination of a research report by CRIAW-NS/FishNet entitled **Women's Health and Well-Being in Six Nova Scotia Fishing Communities**.

In order to bring about better information exchange and coordination of activities affecting women's economic security, Council has established a Round Table on Women's Economic Security. The 18 members are officials from federal and provincial government and community organizations that focus on women's employment and economic security issues. It is expected that the Round Table will begin its work during the coming fiscal year.

Goal: Reducing Violence Against Women

Council works to reduce violence against women in communities, workplaces and families.

In marking the National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women in 2001, two publications were released by the Advisory Council. The popularity of **Making Changes: A Book for Women in Abusive Relationships (3rd edition)** is demonstrated by the fact that 12,000 copies were distributed to fill orders within the first 6 weeks of publication. The French version, **Changer Pour Le Mieux**, was released in February and 1200 copies were needed to fill the immediate demand. An additional 2,259 English-language copies of the publication were downloaded from the web site.

The second publication, part of the statistical series, was entitled **Family Violence and Personal Safety: Women in Nova Scotia**. The publication met with high interest and demand from the media, from women's groups and from students and educators. Approximately 700 copies are in circulation, including those downloaded from the web site.

A number of interventions with the justice system included violence against women as a focus of concern. Council's brief to the federal department of justice, on *Divorce Act* reform, pointed out the high risk to women of various initiatives being considered, for example, the pitfalls of superficially-attractive options for reform which would have the net effect of increasing women's vulnerability to harassment and abuse.

At the provincial level, Council intervened successfully at the Law Amendments committee stage of the *Domestic Violence Intervention Act*, proposing that emergency intervention orders involving children not be automatically referred to Child Protection authorities. Subsequently, Council staff took part in consultations on the implementation of the regulations under the new

legislation.

Council staff continue to consult and advise on matters related to conciliation and mediation services in the Supreme Court (Family Division), and liaise periodically with community groups that share Council's concerns about matters such as restorative justice and conjoint counselling in domestic abuse situations and the possible impact these might have on women. The Executive Director addressed the National Conference on Crime Prevention with particular reference to restorative justice and similar innovations.

In response to community concern, and in partnership with Avalon Sexual Assault Services and Drug Dependency Services (Capital District Health Authority), Council staff developed an informational brochure on Sexual Assault Drugs. 3000 of these brochures have been made available through university campuses and the Nova Scotia Community College, with reprints required due to high demand.

Goal: Improved Health and Well-Being

Council works to improve the health and well-being of women and their families

The Healthy Balance Research Program has the Advisory Council on the Status of Women and the Atlantic Centre of Excellence on Women's Health as its lead partners, along with Dalhousie University and the IWK Health Centre. This 5-year program of research was funded for $1.7 million by the Canadian Institutes for Health Research to investigate the health impacts of caregiving roles on women, in combination with paid work and empowerment in their lives. Over 25 researchers are associated with the program.

By the end of fiscal year 2001-2002, the four Healthy Balance research teams were in place, and both qualitative and secondary research initiatives were well under way. Equity Reference Groups comprised of African-Nova Scotian, First Nations, and immigrant women, as well as women with disabilities were in place, along with a National Reference Group including academics, government officials and community representatives. A background paper prepared by Pat and Hugh Armstrong, **Thinking It Through: Women, Work and Caring in the New Millennium**, has been published and an extensive bibliography of some 750 references has been assembled for the research teams and will be placed on-line for use by researchers everywhere. It is expected that qualitative research and results of secondary data analysis will be available in 2002-03, with a population survey following.

Associated with the theme of caregiving was a National Think Tank on Caregiving held in Charlottetown. This invitational event was attended by the Executive Director, along with 60 researchers, care providers and community representatives from across the country. Clearly, the subject of women's unpaid work and caregiving is one with high relevance to women and to policy makers in various sectors not only in Nova Scotia, but across Canada and throughout the world.

The Advisory Council is part of the consortium on women's midlife health based at the IWK Health Centre for Women and Families. In this context, a framework for Midlife Women's Health is under development, to provide policy and program direction for midlife women's health services across Nova Scotia. The framework document will be presented to the Minister of Health and other appropriate audiences in the healthcare sector across Nova Scotia in 2002-03.

Council staff have ongoing participation in the Interdepartmental AIDS Liaison Committee and the Department of Health's working group on HIV/AIDS in women. Of particular concern to Council is the increase of heterosexual transmission of HIV infection in young women (aged 15-19), underlining the importance of taking gender into account in prevention, education and treatment strategies.

The Advisory Council on the Status of Women has taken the position that direct-to-consumer advertising of prescription drugs is undesirable for a number of reasons. First, the advertising does not provide an adequate information base for informed decisions. Secondly, the advertising does increase consumer demand and physician response, even when the efficacy of the drug is in question, raising health care costs and, again, consumer safety issues. The Council has requested that the federal government enforce and strengthen existing legislation in this area, and the Executive Director addressed a national forum of 50 participants on this area of women's health.

Council staff took part in both governmental and community-based consultations related to population health approaches to health care redesign. Further, Council provided consultation to Nova Scotia Women's FishNet in obtaining the funding and development of workshop materials to assist women in coastal communities in identifying links between social and economic policies and women's health.

These activities, in addition to promoting intersectoral coordination of health programming, also are part of the localized information base we need in order to fulfill our mandate. In other words, networking, consultation and advice provide both Council members and staff with information needed to accurately reflect the concerns of Nova Scotia women, and the possible approaches, alternatives and solutions needed to bring to fruition our mission of advancing equality, fairness and dignity for all women in Nova Scotia.

Financial Results

Actual to Authority Variance Report				
Budget Subject	**Authority**	**Actual**	**Percentage of Authority**	**Comments**
Policy, Research & Information Svcs.	$525,800.00	$502,061.00	95.50%	Actual is low. Savings were experienced in salaries and benefits due to unpaid educational leave of two staff.
Community Liaison & Rural Outreach	$142,200.00	$140,799.00	99.00%	No significant variance.
Total	**$668,060.00**	**$642,860.00**	**96.20%**	

The expenditures of the agency were well within the spending limits set, and are consistent with government's overall direction to restrain expenditures.

Outcome Measures 2001-02
Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women

Council Members' Self-Rating of Participation in Community

One of the Advisory Council's three core business areas is policy and research. A desired outcome within this area is the sustained effectiveness of the Advisory Council.

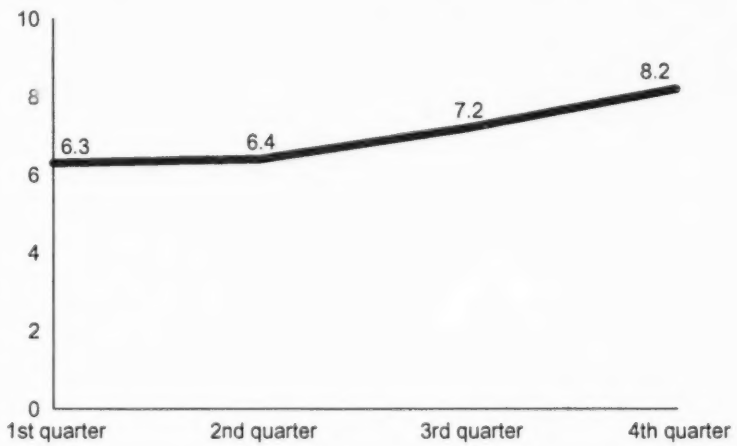
What does the measure tell us?

The Council members' self-rating of participation in the community is a quarterly administered self-rating which ranges from 1 (was not able to do any Council-related work) to 10 (did Council-related work at least once a week). Scores are averaged across all Council members for each quarter of the fiscal year. Higher scores are indicative of a more active, vibrant Council with members who are dedicating a significant amount of personal time to the concerns of women in the province and who know the needs of the women they are serving.

Where are we now?

As might be expected, Council members' self-ratings increased over the course of the fiscal year as members became more knowledgeable about and comfortable with their roles (see Figure 1). At the start of the fiscal year, Council self-ratings averaged 6.3 out of 10. By the end of 2001-02, the average Council self-rating was 8.2 out of 10, with half of Council members indicating that they were involved in Council-related work at least once a week, if not daily.

Average Advisory Council Member Self-Ratings, 2001-02



Source: Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women

Figure 1.

Where do we want to go/be in the future?

Average Council member self-ratings for the third and fourth quarters of 2001-02 exceeded our target for 2004-05. Although there is likely to be some fluctuation as new members are introduced to Council, etc., it is expected that we will continue to meet or exceed our target of 7 out of 10 for 2004-05.

Council Web-Site Visits

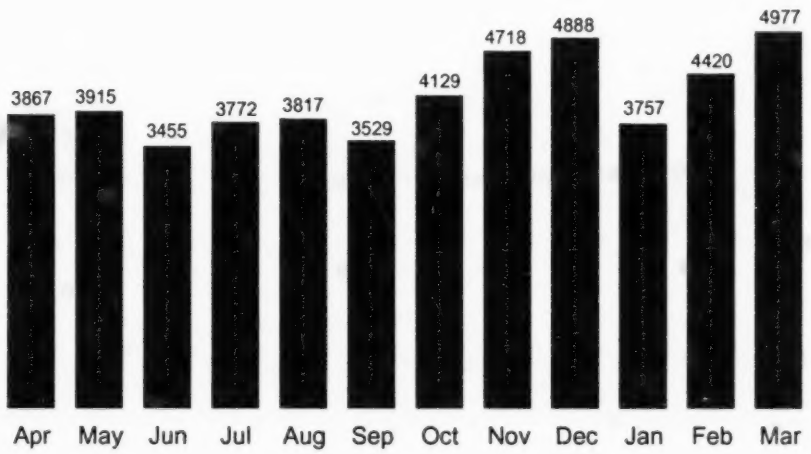
Information and education is another of the Advisory Council's three core business areas. A desired outcome within this area is the public's awareness of Council initiatives.

What does the measure tell us?

Tracking the Council's web-site utilization gives us an idea of the popularity of the Council's work, including its briefs, statistical publications and other informational documents, which the Council is increasingly making available to the public in electronic format. Consistently high Council web-site usage indicates a consistently strong public interest in and demand for the Council's work.

Where are we now?

Advisory Council Website Usage (pageviews), 2001-02



Source: Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women

Figure 2.

In 2001-02, the Advisory Council's web-site had 49,244 visits. Though some fluctuation was evident in the monthly number of website visits, the overall fiscal year showed an upward trend. For example, the average number of website visits for the 1st quarter was 3,745 and for the last quarter was 4,384.

Where do we want to go/be in the future?

Our target for this measure is to exceed 50,000 website visits by 2004-05. With recent enhancement of the Council's website, we do not anticipate having difficulty attaining this goal.

Information and Referral Requests

Information and education is another of the Advisory Council's three core business areas. A desired outcome within this area is the public's awareness of Council initiatives.

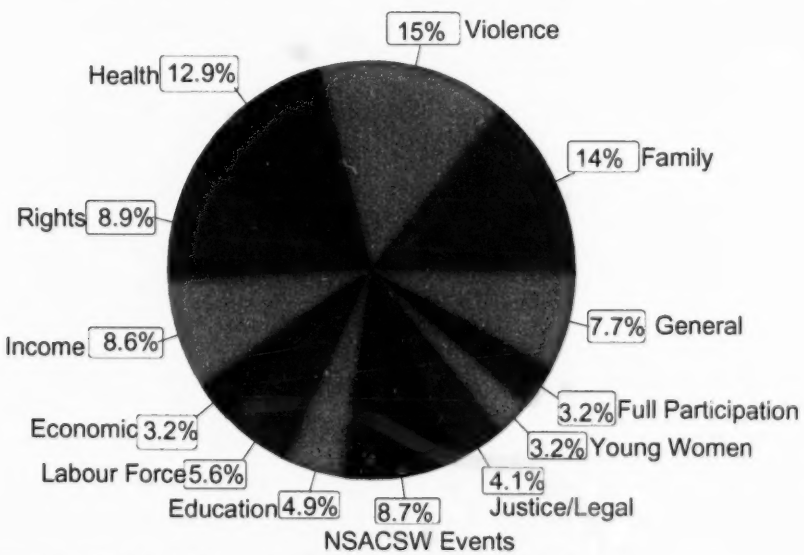
What does the measure tell us?

Tracking and analysis of the information and referral requests made to Council staff by the public gives us a sense of the public's level of awareness of the information and referral services that the Advisory Council provides. Because staff also keep track of the topic areas of these requests, we can also get a sense of the types and variety of issues that are of concern to the women we serve. The statistics collected also allow us to determine who is making the most use of Advisory Council services, what types of requests people are making, the types of actions taken by staff to address the requests and staff satisfaction with the action provided.

Where are we now?

In 2001-02, 1242 persons made a total of 1597 requests for information to Advisory Council staff. The requests were comprised of 1703 subjects and resulted in 1844 actions taken by staff. The subject area of requests was varied but requests related to family, violence, and health/well-being accounted for 42% of all requests (see Figure 3). Staff were **satisfied** with the actions they took in response to public requests 87.8% of the time, **somewhat satisfied** 10.7% of the time and **not satisfied** only 1.5% of the time.

Subject Area of Requests Made to Advisory Council, 2001-02



Source: Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women

Figure 3.

Where do we want to go/be in the future?

Our target for this measure for 2004-05 is 2000 requests for information and referral from the public. Many of the information requests previously made be telephone or in person are now met through our website. We will need to review targets for the Service Information System in order to ensure that both information and referral components are accurately reflected, and that the effect of closing two field offices in recent years is taken into account.

Use of Advisory Council Publications

Information and education is another of the Advisory Council's three core business areas. A desired outcome within this area is the public's support for and satisfaction with Council's work.

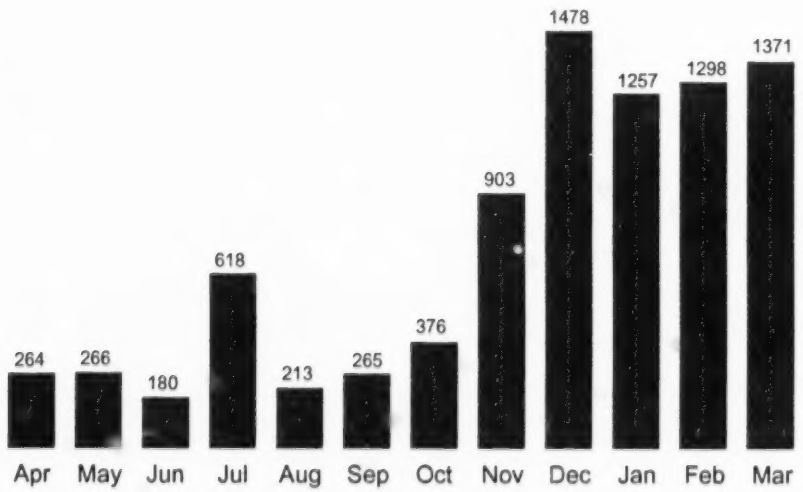
What does the measure tell us?

Tracking the public's use of Council publications, both printed copy and electronic format, gives us an idea of the popularity of the Council's published work, including its briefs, statistical publications and other informational documents. Consistently high demand for Council publications indicates the public's interest in and satisfaction with the published work of the Council, analogous to the media's use of circulation figures. Tracking the distribution by publication allows us to know how popular particular publications are.

Where are we now?

In 2001-02, close to 8,500 copies of Council publications were downloaded from the Council website. In addition, approximately 12,000 hard copies of Council publications were distributed to the public, as well as to government and community organizations.

Advisory Council Publications (PDF)
Downloaded from Web-Site, 2001-02



Source: Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women

Figure 4.

As can be seen in Figure 4, the number of publications downloaded from the Council's website increased dramatically over the course of the fiscal year as Council publications increasingly became available in PDF format. With the release, on December 6th, of the third edition of the Council's most popular publication, *Making Changes: A Book for Women in Abusive Relationships*, website download and distribution of Council publications reached its peak for the year. Between December 6th and the end of the fiscal year, over 11,000 paper copies (approximately 850 of which were the French version, *Changer pour le mieux*) of *Making Changes* were distributed to the public and women's organizations and close to 2,300 more PDF copies of this publication were downloaded from the Council website.

Consistently high demand was also evident for the Council's statistical publications *(Money Matters*, *Family Matters*, and *Family Violence & Personal Safety*), with close to 3,000 PDF copies downloaded and approximately 500 paper copies distributed in 2001-02.

The importance of the Council's website in improving the public's access to Council information can hardly be over-stated. The number of research and statistical publications downloaded, for example, exceeds the number the Council could typically afford to make available in hard copy. Thus our information and outreach capacity is enhanced in a highly cost-effective manner.

Where do we want to go/be in the future?

Due primarily to the great public demand for the 3rd edition of *Making Changes*, the number of requests for Council publications in 2001-02 far surpassed the target we set for 2004-05. In total, over 20,000 copies of Council publications were downloaded or distributed (paper copy) in 2001-02. We, therefore, do not anticipate having difficulty meeting our target of 5,000 or more requests for publications in 2004-05.

Women's Political Participation Workshop
Enrolment and Effectiveness

Community Liaison and rural outreach is another of the Advisory Council's three core business areas. A desired outcome within this area is the increased participation of women in public affairs.

What does the measure tell us?

The first of a series of workshops designed to attract more women to political life was held in Yarmouth in March, 2002. The level of demand and interest in the workshop was assessed by the number of women enroled. The effectiveness of the workshop was measured in a number of ways. Participants completed a workshop evaluation form where they were asked to rate the utility of the various workshop components. Participants were also asked to indicate their **current** level of political participation and, upon completion of the workshop, were asked to predict their **future** level of political participation in four political domains (community, municipal, provincial, and federal).

Where are we now?

Enrolment for the first of our political workshops totaled 16 women. This number fell slightly short of our target of 20 participants, and efforts will have to be made to increase enrolment in future workshops. Despite the small sample size, however, results pertaining to the effectiveness of the workshop were highly positive and indicate the usefulness of Council's continuing work in this area.

Workshop participants rated the utility of the workshop on a number of dimensions. In each case, participants used a 5-point scale where 1 = not at all useful, 3 = somewhat useful, and 5 = very useful.

All participants rated the presentation on Agencies, Boards, and Commissions as either useful (42.9%) or very useful (57.1%). No participants indicated a rating less than 4. The average rating for this workshop dimension was 4.57 out of 5.

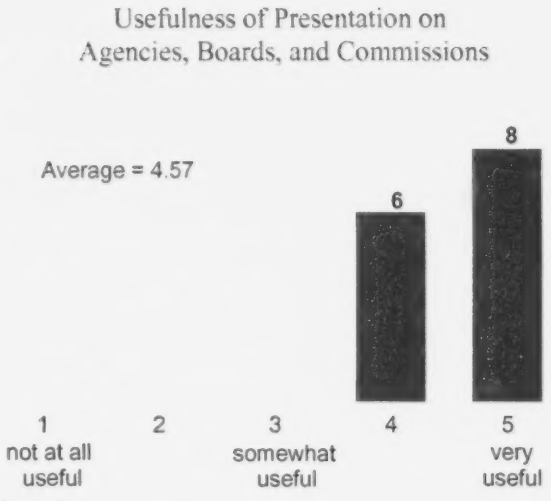


Figure 5.

The majority (78.6%) of participants rated the panel presentation as very useful and another 21.4% rated it as useful. No participants indicated a rating less than 4. The average rating for this workshop dimension was 4.79 out of 5.

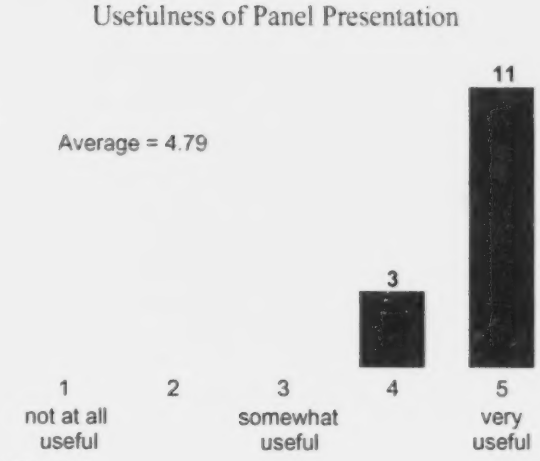


Figure 6.

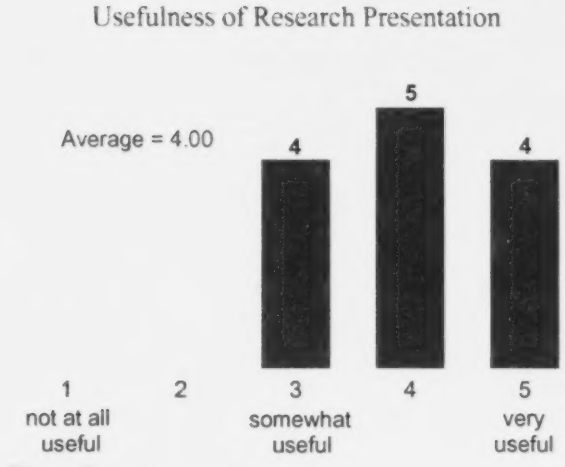


Figure 7.

30.8% of participants rated the research presentation as very useful, 38.5% rated it as useful, and 30.8% rated it as somewhat useful. No participants indicated a rating less than 3. The average rating for this workshop dimension was 4.00 out of 5.

Workshop participants were also asked whether they would recommend the workshop to other women. The vast majority of participants (92.9%) indicated that they would definitely recommend the workshop. The average rating for this item was 4.93 out of 5.

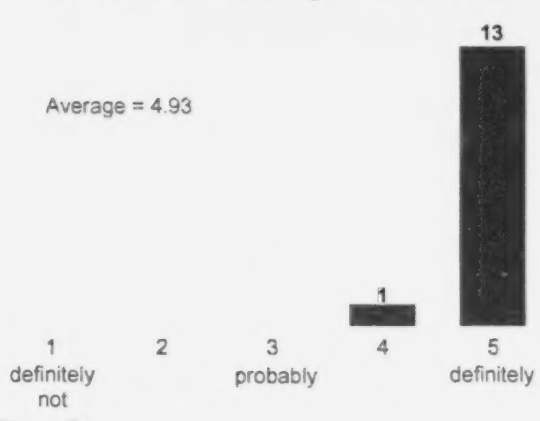


Figure 8.

The final workshop evaluation item asked participants whether they would be interested in attending other workshops on women's political participation. The majority of workshop participants (78.6%) indicated that they would definitely be interested in future workshops. The average rating for this item was 4.71 out of 5.

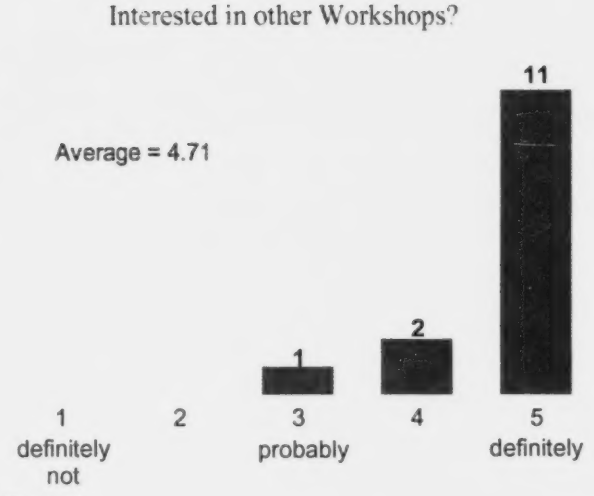


Figure 9.

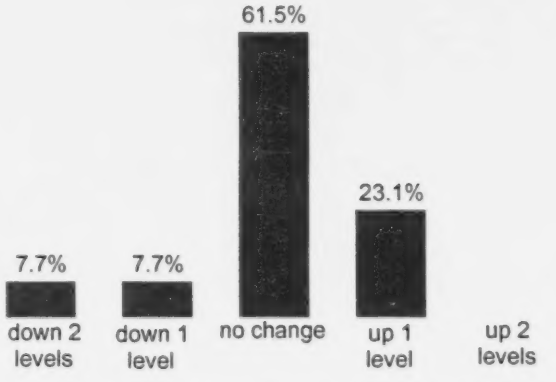
At the beginning of the workshop, participants were asked to indicate their **current** level of participation in four domains of political life: community, municipal, provincial, and federal. For each domain, participants rated their level of involvement according to the following scale:

- leader
- active involvement
- occasional involvement
- no involvement

At the end of the workshop, participants used the same scale as above to rate their **future** level of political participation. Difference scores were calculated by subtracting the current participation level from the future participation level for each political domain. Results from the Yarmouth workshop indicated the following:

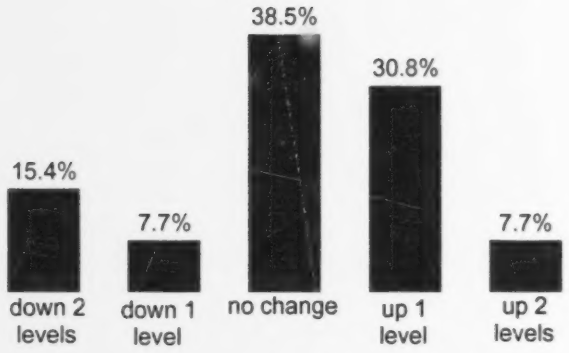
Community Politics

23.1% of participants indicated that their participation in community-level politics would increase by one level in the future.



Source: Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women

Figure 10.



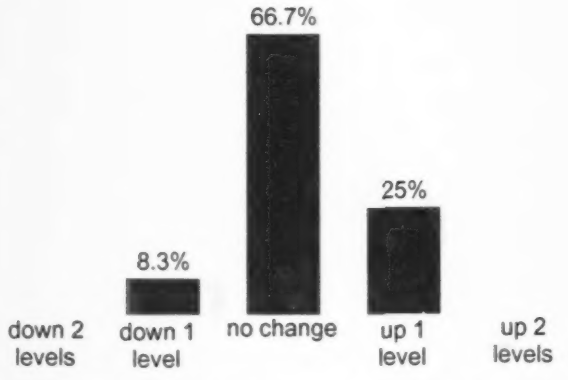
Source: Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women
Figure 11.

Municipal Politics

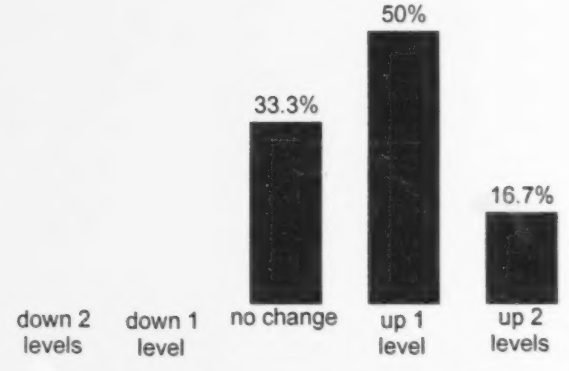
30.8% of participants indicated that their participation in municipal-level politics would increase by one level and another 7.7% indicated their participation would increase by two levels.

Provincial Politics

25% of participants indicated that their participation in provincial-level politics would increase by one level in the future.



Source: Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women
Figure 12.



Source: Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women
Figure 13.

Federal Politics

50% of participants indicated that their participation in federal-level politics would increase by one level and another 16.7% indicated their participation would increase by two levels.

Where do we want to go/be in the future?

The initial results of this workshop are encouraging but are clearly of a preliminary nature. Additional workshops on women's political participation are being conducted in 2002-03 and will be evaluated in the same way. It is encouraging that the methodology adopted appears to be effective in documenting planned change in political activity and is acceptable to the participants. Furthermore, the information is useful in showing areas requiring further improvement and follow-up activity.

Workshop enrolment targets for 2004-05 were previously set at 30 women per workshop. As our experience with the workshops grows, it has become obvious that total enrolment per workshop should not exceed 25 given the constraints of the workshop process. It is not anticipated that attaining this revised enrolment target will be problematic.

Given the highly positive response of the first workshop participants (see Figures 5-13), we do not anticipate having difficulty attaining our target of 25% of women indicating plans to participate in public affairs for 2004-05.

Supplemental Information and Appendices

Appendix A - Council Members

Biographical informaion is current for the reporting period.

Cape Breton Region

Patricia LeBlanc is a resident of Sydney with extensive community involvement. As a woman with disabilities, she has been active in promoting the inclusion of people with disabilities. Ms. LeBlanc has served on the board of Community Involvement of the Disabled holding various executive positions on the board over the years. She has also served on the board of the Nova Scotia League for Equal Opportunities. She initiated the start-up of the ACE Bowling League, the first bowling league for persons with cross-disabilities. Ms. LeBlanc represented post-secondary Nova Scotian students with disabilities on the board of directors of the National Education Association of Disabled Students from 1990-1994 and also served a two-year term on the Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women from 1996-1998 (Patricia Flynn). Over the years she has worked as a bookkeeper, researcher, office supervisor and as an enforcement officer/case aide. Ms. LeBlanc is working on a Bachelor of Business Administration from the University College of Cape Breton.

Mary Sampson of Sydney joined the paid workforce as an instructor at the adult vocational training centre in Sydney after a 23-year career in homemaking and childcare. She later became a ward clerk at the Northside General Hospital, a position she held for 15 years. Ms. Sampson is a volunteer member of the Cape Breton Island Housing Board which oversees the placement of applicants, the removal of clients, and the upkeep of housing units. She is also a skilled and experienced public speaker.

Rita Warner is a resident of Cape Breton with extensive career experience and community involvement. For the last 25 years she has held a variety of positions with such organizations as Inverness County Recreation & Tourism, Statistics Canada, MacDonald Hall in Inverness, and the Women Aware Women's Centre in Port Hawkesbury. Ms. Warner is skilled in program design and administration; project/group facilitation; and promotions. She has been an active volunteer for a myriad of community organizations including Women Aware, the Women's Reference Group to the Labour Force Development Board, Violence Against Women, Inverness County Literacy Board, the Purple Ribbon Campaign and the Nova Scotia Tourism Association.

Fundy Region

Sonja Power is a resident of Amherst and is a Correctional Officer with Springhill Institution in the Maximum Security Women's Unit. Currently, she is the President/Chair of the Board for the Amherst Association of Healthy Adolescent Sexuality and is an active member of the Springhill Institution's Women's Committee. Ms. Power has extensive volunteer experience in the corrections, victim support and healthy living areas. Ms. Power has held a number of term positions over the years as a counsellor, outreach coordinator, wellness coordinator and project assistant with organizations of particular interest to women.

Shirley E. Jackson (1999-2000) of Inglewood is a married mother of four who works outside the home. She is very active in her community as a member of the Inglewood Community Club, the Inglewood Education Committee, and the Annapolis County Family & Children's Services. She is the secretary for Annapolis to Kingston Black Community Development, a volunteer canvasser for various charities, and a volunteer typist for various community groups. Ms. Jackson has also served as secretary for both the Western Regional Alliance of Black Communities and for the Black United Front Council. Ms. Jackson has been working to save an orphaned and seemingly forgotten Black cemetery outside the Annapolis Royal area.

Highland Region

Doreen Paris of New Glasgow was employed with the Extension Department of St. Francis Xavier University. She is active in the Pictou County Women's Centre, and past president of Tearmann Society for Battered Women. She was provincial president of the African United Baptist Association Women's Institute, and received certification as a Black legal advocate. Doreen's contributions to her community have been recognized by the New Glasgow Volunteer of the Year Award and the YWCA Women of Distinction Award. Ms. Paris also represented the Highland Region from 1994-1998.

South Shore Region

Cheryl A. Bell is an administrator with the Nova Scotia Sport and Recreation Commission in Bridgewater. She has also worked in the Sheriff's office, and with a transportation company. She is a community volunteer and a church worker. Ms. Bell is married with three children.

Sheila Lewis operates a home-based pottery business in Yarmouth. She has been a member of BPW Yarmouth since 1985, is currently President of BPW Nova Scotia and sits on the National Executive. Sheila is the recipient of BPW Canada's Women of the Year for 2000. She has a strong interest in women and their economic stability and is Co-Chair of Women for Community Economic Development and the Tri-County Women's Centre. She was Chair of the Yarmouth Regional Business Corporation and is active in the Yarmouth Chamber of Commerce and Yarmouth Craft Guild.

Central Region

Linda Carvery, of Halifax, is an accomplished performer/singer and entrepreneur with interests in the community, economic and social development. She is Executive Director of the African Nova Scotian Training Centre. Ms. Carvery has spent many years working in the community, particularly with persons with disabilities and families in crisis. She received an Honorary Doctorate of Letters from Mount Saint Vincent University in 1998.

M. Chantal Richard is a lawyer in Halifax with Stewart McKelvey Stirling Scales. Before graduationg from Dalhousie Law School in 1997, she spent time in the Dominican Republic, and is the founding director of the Saint George School of Languages in Santo Domingo. Ms. Richard sits on numerous committees and boards.

Patricia Doyle-Bedwell is a Mi'kmaq woman, a mother, a teacher and a student. In 1993, she graduated from Dalhousie Law School as one of the first of five Mi'kmaq women to do so. In the past she has worked in the areas of child welfare law and policy, land claims, and the criminal justice system. Main areas of interest are issues relating to Aboriginal women. Professor Doyle-Bedwell is currently Director of the Transition Year Program at Dalhousie University. Previously, she was an Assistant Professor of Law at Dalhousie University and the Acting Director of the Indigenous Black and Mi'kmaq Program. She is a Justice Commissioner of the Mi'kmaq Justice Institute. She has represented the Central Region since 1994 and was elected Chair of the Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women in 1996, a position to which she was re-elected by Council members in 1997 and 1998.

Appendix B

Council Publications 2001-02

Cumberland County Women's Resource Directory (April, 2001)

Custody, Access, and Child Support in Canada - A brief in response to the F/P/T Consultation on *Divorce Act* Reform (June, 2001)

Annual Report for the years 1998-2000 (November, 2001)

Family Matters: Women in Nova Scotia. Part 2 of a Statistical Series (November, 2001)

Backgrounder and Highlights for Family Matters: Women in Nova Scotia. Part 2 of a Statistical Series (November, 2001)

Family Violence and Personal Safety: Women in Nova Scotia. Part 3 of a Statistical Series (December, 2001)

Making Changes: A Book for Women in Abusive Relationships, 3rd Edition (December, 2001)

Changer pour le mieux: Un livre pour les femmes victimes de vioence, troisième édition (December, 2001)

Review of the Employment Equity Act: A Report to the Standing Committee on Human Resource Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities (February, 2002)

Fact Sheets:

Revised fact sheet on Woman Abuse - 2001

Women's Education in Nova Scotia: 25 Years of Change (March, 2002)